Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A collaborative computing method comprising the steps of:

providing a collaborative computing system comprising at least one instant messaging client, the collaborative computing system including presence awareness features that automatically detect online entities that are logged into the collaborative computing system;

initializing said instant ~~message~~ messaging client within a graphical user interface of said collaborative computing system;

displaying within the graphical user interface an availability list consisting of the detected online entities;

establishing at least one customizable search limitation for a search engine, said search limitation preventing users other than users belonging to a predetermined class of users from accessing data records pertaining to one or more predetermined online entities and preventing selected users from receiving data indicating an online presence of one or more predetermined online entities;

receiving a search initializing action from said graphical user interface;

responsive to said receiving step, presenting a search view having search input fields within said graphical user interface;

receiving input via said input fields that specifies a customized search pattern;

subject to said at least one search limitation, searching by the search engine at least one record source of the online entities in the availability list for online entities that satisfy said customized search pattern using the presence awareness features;

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displaying a search result from said searching step within said graphical user interface;

selecting at least one of the online entities displayed in the search result; and

establishing a software-enhanced communication including at least one communication other than instant messaging related communications between a user of the instant messaging client and the selected online entity.

2.   (Cancelled).

3.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said search initializing action comprises at most two user inputs.

4.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:

displaying a menu option within said graphical user interface for said instant ~~message~~ messaging client, wherein said menu option is configured to initiate said search view.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:

providing a keyboard combination to initiate said search view, whereby said keyboard combination is a hot-key combination.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

establishing a plurality of user specific search patterns; and

recording said search patterns so that said search patterns can be retrieved at a later time.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said record source comprises a first

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database that is a record source specifying at least one online entity and a second database having a data field, wherein said data field specifies an attribute relating to said online entity that is not specified within said first database, said searching step further comprising the steps of:

      establishing a query that includes said data field; and

      searching for at least one online entity using said query.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

      specifying a plurality of record sources, each of which specifies at least one online entity, wherein said searching step further comprises searching said plurality of record sources for online entities that satisfy said search pattern.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

      establishing at least one search preference that is used when performing said searching step, wherein said search result is based at least in part upon said search preference.

10.   (Original) The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of:

      establishing an order in which said record sources are accessed during said searching step.

11.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

      directly executing at least one software-enhanced communication involving said online entity and a user of said graphical user interface using said search result.

12-35. (Cancelled).

36.   (New) A collaborative computing system comprising:

means for automatically detecting online entities that are logged into the collaborative computing system;

at least one instant messaging client;

means for initializing the instant messaging client within a graphical user interface of the collaborative computing system;

means for displaying within the graphical user interface an availability list consisting of the detected online entities;

means for establishing at least one customizable search limitation for a search engine, said search limitation preventing users other than users belonging to a predetermined class of users from accessing data records pertaining to one or more predetermined online entities and preventing selected users from receiving data indicating an online presence of one or more predetermined online entities;

means for receiving a search initializing action from the graphical user interface;

means for, responsive to the receiving step, presenting a search view having search input fields within the graphical user interface;

means for receiving input via the input fields that specifies a customized search pattern;

means for, subject to the at least one search limitation, searching by the search engine at least one record source of the online entities in the availability list for online entities that satisfy the customized search pattern;

means for displaying a search result from the searching step within the graphical user interface;

means for selecting at least one of the online entities displayed in the search result; and

means for establishing a software-enhanced communication including at least one communication other than instant messaging related communications between a user of

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the instant messaging client and the selected online entity.

37.   (New) A machine-readable storage having stored thereon, a computer program having a plurality of code sections, said code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

providing a collaborative computing system comprising at least one instant messaging client, the collaborative computing system including presence awareness features that automatically detect online entities that are logged into the collaborative computing system;

initializing said instant messaging client within a graphical user interface of said collaborative computing system;

displaying within the graphical user interface an availability list consisting of the detected online entities;

establishing at least one customizable search limitation for a search engine, said search limitation preventing users other than users belonging to a predetermined class of users from accessing data records pertaining to one or more predetermined online entities and preventing selected users from receiving data indicating an online presence of one or more predetermined online entities;

receiving a search initializing action from said graphical user interface;

responsive to said receiving step, presenting a search view having search input fields within said graphical user interface;

receiving input via said input fields that specifies a customized search pattern;

subject to said at least one search limitation, searching by the search engine at least one record source of the online entities in the availability list for online entities that satisfy said customized search pattern using the presence awareness features;

displaying a search result from said searching step within said graphical user interface;

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selecting at least one of the online entities displayed in the search result; and

establishing a software-enhanced communication including at least one communication other than instant messaging related communications between a user of the instant messaging client and the selected online entity.